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## CHILDREN ON THE STREETS OF CINCINNATI

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BY E. N. CLOPPER,

Secretary for Ohio Valley States, National Child Labor Committee.

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The number of children upon the streets of Cincinnati and the conditions surrounding them do not present a problem differing in any notable respect from the situation in any other large city. The population of the city consists largely of Jews and German-Americans, both of these peoples being home-loving, law-abiding and thrifty, who almost invariably provide good homes and educational facilities for their offspring, and in this fact lies the hope for the improvement of the conditions now existing among the less fortunate elements of this city's population.

The school census for last year showed there were 110,591 children between the ages of six and twenty-one in the city; of this number thirty-five per cent were not attending any kind of school, but sixty per cent were above the age limit for compulsory attendance. Of the total number of children between the ages of six and fourteen, the compulsory period, twenty-eight per cent were not enrolled in the public schools, but as the parochial and private schools of the city instruct more than half as many children as do the public schools, it is reasonable to conclude that the number of children in Cincinnati within the age limits for compulsory school attendance who do not attend any school, is small. There are no statistics available to show the exact number.

### *Newsboys*

As in other cities, the great majority of children engaged in following the street trades in Cincinnati are newsboys. There are about 1,900 regular newsboys in the city, of whom approximately one-fifth are negroes. The Newsboys' Protective Association was organized for these boys in January, 1907, and club rooms were provided in the downtown district. The association is supported by subscription and by the proceeds from entertainments. Certain wealthy business men of the city have guaranteed its maintenance in case of financial embarrassment. A reading room, a gymnasium

and baths have been installed and the services of a superintendent who gives all of his time to the club, have been secured. Here boys congregate in the evening and at other hours when not engaged in selling papers, the object being to get them off the street during their leisure hours. The attendance, however, is small. The present membership of the association is nearly 500, but the average daily attendance during February, March and April of this year was only 56, three-fifths of these being white and the rest colored. The attendance is greater during the school vacation period. The superintendent co-operates with the truant officers and the probation officers connected with the juvenile court, to the end that as many of the boys as possible shall attend school.

The morning newspapers are distributed almost entirely by youths and men, the boys, as a rule, handling only the afternoon papers. Except during the baseball season there is ordinarily no demand for these papers after seven o'clock in the evening, the last edition being issued at half-past two in the afternoon. Consequently the boys have their winter evenings free. But during the summer they are in the streets with the sporting editions usually until nine o'clock. The majority return home as soon as their papers have been sold, but many remain in the downtown district until late at night, some begging money from passersby, others offering chewing gum, shoe strings or lead pencils for sale, but in reality also begging, others lingering about the five-cent theatres and flitting around from place to place, generally absorbed in the evil features of the city's life. The number of girls who sell newspapers in the city is very small indeed, and officers spare no efforts to discourage and prevent the practice. In fact, the girls so employed are so few that they do not form a factor in the problem.

Children as young as five years of age sell papers in the residence districts. The branch offices of the afternoon newspapers sell to the newsboys at the rate of two copies for one cent, the children earning half a cent by the sale of every copy. Little five-year-old tots begin their careers by purchasing two copies and earn a cent by their sale each afternoon. Some of the older boys dispose of as many as three hundred copies daily, thus earning \$1.50 in two or three hours, but thirty-five or forty cents represents the average amount earned in one day. Newsboys may return all unsold copies and be reimbursed at the purchase price, but this is done only in

rare instances, for the children persist until all their copies have been sold.

The situation in Cincinnati is greatly aggravated by the policy pursued by agents of two afternoon newspapers to maintain and extend their circulation. A number of bullies are employed whose principal duty is to follow the newsboys who sell the opposition paper and threaten and harass them if they are found trying to sell more than a specified number of copies. One paper allows the newsboys to purchase ten copies of the opposition sheet, and if any boy is found with more than this number for sale, a bully swoops down upon him, sometimes strikes him if the time and place are favorable, and the privilege of selling more editions of that paper is taken away. One afternoon recently the writer stood on one of the busiest corners in the downtown district and watched this warfare. Several boys were there, selling the final edition of one of the two rival newspapers. Suddenly a small band of young men, all negroes, appeared with copies of the other paper and instead of entering into fair competition with the boys, deliberately got in front of them and harassed them wherever they went, to prevent their making sales. They even drove away a crippled boy who had been hobbling around on crutches, trying to sell a few copies. They did not dare strike the boys, as the place was too public, but they succeeded in curtailing their sales. The circulation manager of one of these newspapers, when questioned regarding the matter, admitted that he had in his employ five bullies, but claimed he had been obliged to resort to such methods in self-defense, as the other paper had instituted the practice and employed a larger number. The circulation manager of the other paper, when asked about the matter, declared that those were conditions that obtained years ago and that nothing of the kind was done to-day. The effect of such treatment upon the developing minds of boys can well be imagined, and it is to be hoped that these newspapers will soon adopt a policy fairer to the boys and worthier of the journalistic profession.

Formerly every newsboy had a badge bearing a number, and his name and address were recorded in the newspaper office so that assistance could be rendered if necessary when a boy fell ill or met with accident or other misfortune, but the badges have been lost and the effort abandoned. The following statistics, covering four hun-



were living with their mother in two rooms. One boy said his father had left home when he was a baby, and that he sold papers and helped at home. Another boy's father had run away six years ago and had never been heard from since. The father of one was in an asylum for the insane. In another case the boy's father had left home, the mother had married again and now conducts a saloon, the bartender being her second husband. One case was found where a family of five persons occupied two rooms; another where ten lived in four rooms; and another where seven were cooped up in three.

There are about ten thousand Italians in the city, the majority being Sicilians, and the average number of children in a family is four. The experience of workers among these people has shown that the Italians are much more careful of the welfare of their children, and especially of their daughters, than is generally supposed. They do not allow their girls to go to work anywhere unless two go together, and if there be no suitable companion the child must remain at home. Nearly half a century has elapsed since the city hospital was built, but in all that period, the records, it is said, show not a single Italian girl ever admitted into the ward where disreputable characters are treated. The Italians seldom if ever desert their children, but they have not yet learned that the school is a better training ground than the street.

### *Fruit Vending*

Almost all the Italian children who work are engaged in fruit vending or basket selling. In a canvass of 77 Italian children, the distribution among various occupations was as follows:

Fruit venders .....	44	Bootblack .....	1
Basket sellers .....	13	Organ grinder .....	1
Newsboys .....	8	In shooting gallery .....	1
Delivery boys .....	3		—
Odd jobs .....	2	Total .....	77
Errand boys and girls.....	4		

Of this number, 55 were Sicilians, 15 Neapolitans, 5 Genoese, 1 Lombard and 1 Calabrese.

Of the 44 fruit venders, 24 were boys and 20 were girls; 41 were attending school and three were not; one was an orphan; the

average age was thirteen; the average daily amount of sales, \$1.42; the average number of hours devoted daily to this work five, part of the time being before school but most of it after dismissal, the hours ranging from a minimum of three to a maximum of seven daily. The three children who were not attending school were aged respectively twelve, thirteen and fourteen years; the twelve-year-old boy was found to be working ten hours daily, in charge of a fruit stand in front of his father's store, his mother is demented, his father is old, the boy is the eldest child in the family and gives all his earnings to his parents. The thirteen-year-old boy was working with his father, pushing a fruit cart from eight to ten hours a day, but, as with practically all Italian children, he was not allowed to handle any money. The fourteen-year-old boy was found pushing a cart and tending a stand in market, working twelve hours a day, his sales amounting to \$3.25 on an average; this boy maintains a family of five persons, his younger sister is blind and his father is dead.

The ages of these little fruit venders are as follows: Seven years, 1; 9 years, 2; 10 years, 3; 11 years, 1; 12 years, 14; 13 years, 20; 14 years, 3. Total, 44.

The majority of Italian children engaged in this line of work tend stands in front of their parents' stores, and when anyone stops to make a purchase, the father or mother is called to take the money. One ten-year-old boy works six hours daily in the market, part of the time before and part after school, there are six children in the family and one is a deaf mute. A thirteen-year-old boy works four hours out of school daily and eighteen hours on Saturday, tending a stand in front of his father's store and driving a fruit wagon. Another boy of the same age works seven hours daily besides attending school, and on Saturday he rises at five in the morning and retires at a half hour before midnight, his sales on this day amounting to three dollars. A little girl of eleven years tends a fruit stand five hours daily and also goes to school; she has two brothers over fifteen years of age who cannot read.

#### *Other Trades*

Of the thirteen basket sellers, nine were girls and four were boys. Their ages range from nine to thirteen years. All were Sicilians, there were no orphans among them, and all were attend-

ing school. Their average age is eleven, average daily amount of sales eighty-five cents, and average number of hours devoted daily to the work four, part of the time before and part after school. On Saturdays these children work in the market from fifteen to eighteen hours, their sales then amounting to about three dollars.

The errand boys and girls earn on an average thirty-four cents per day during an average time of three hours. Two do not attend school; one of these is a little Lombard girl of thirteen years whose parents are separated. The other is a Sicilian boy of fourteen years who is small for his age, has just withdrawn from school and works six hours daily, his father is insane and has five children. This little fellow is the eldest child, and is soon to take a position in a tailor's shop as an apprentice at a salary of \$4.50 per week. The one organ grinder found is thirteen years old and works two hours before school and again after school and all day Saturday, usually collecting from \$2.50 to \$3.00 on the holiday. The attendant in a shooting gallery is a Genoese boy of twelve years who works four hours daily besides attending school, and on Saturday and Sunday gives all his time to helping at this business, taking in as much money as his father does.

A little boy eleven years old was found who earned about three dollars a week working at anything he could find; there are five children in the family, the father is dead and the mother cannot speak English; this little boy attends school and works five hours daily.

### *Messenger Boys*

The messenger boys are in the employ of the two telegraph companies and the postmaster. The Western Union boys in Cincinnati number 100, their ages range from fourteen to twenty years, the majority being over sixteen. All are white and many different nationalities are represented among them. There is a day and a night force, those on the latter work nine hours and are over sixteen years of age as required by law. Some of the boys on the day force take courses at night at the Young Men's Christian Association. The night boys are paid a regular salary of \$20 per month, the day boys are paid according to the piece plan and earn from \$15 to \$35 per month, the amount depending upon the individual and the energy put into the work. Caps are furnished by



the company, but the boys purchase their own uniforms, paying for them on the instalment plan, the company claiming that the boys take much better care of them when the transaction is made on a value received basis.

The American District Telegraph boys number 60 in this city. Their ages range from fourteen to nineteen years, the majority of them being fifteen and sixteen years old. The average number of hours the boys work during the day is seven, and they are paid according to the piece plan. The night force numbers six; they are all over sixteen years of age and work seven hours. American, German, Irish, Roumanian, Russian, Canadian, Jew and several other nationalities are represented. All are white boys and all have homes of some description. It is an interesting fact that in the company's experience the employees who came from boys' homes all were troublesome and had to be dismissed, while those who came from the House of Refuge and others recommended by the juvenile court were found to be good and reliable. These boys have caps and badges but no uniforms; they pay for their caps and the sense of real ownership tends to make the boys take better care of them. The American District Telegraph boys are paid every two weeks, the largest amount of earnings on record for this period being \$19 and the average being \$10, or \$20 per month. Frequently from eight to ten high school boys are employed on Saturdays and Sundays in place of regular boys, who thus get a holiday.

When either company is charged with the delivery of a message or a package to a house whose character is known or believed to be questionable, one of the older boys is detailed to carry it, but it often happens that a call for a messenger is received from a hotel or a drug store, and the company supplying the boy is ignorant of the destination of the message or package to be delivered until the boy returns to the office and reports. In many such cases the messenger is sent to a house of ill fame. The law forbids a boy to enter such a place, and he is ordered to deliver his message at the door and then leave, but nevertheless such a situation is full of peril for him.

Other temptations assail the messenger boy in his work, and are frequently yielded to. The old practice of raising the amount of charges on the envelope of a telegram is notorious, and is still an ever-present problem to the companies. When a boy has been detected in this petty crime and is questioned about it, he too often

adds to the one misdeed the other and equally grievous one of lying. Then he is dismissed and the odds against his recovery of good standing and self-respect are heavy indeed.

The postmaster of Cincinnati employs forty boys as special delivery messengers. They are not under the rules of the civil service, and their only duty is to deliver letters bearing the special delivery stamp. They are from fifteen to twenty years of age, most of them being seventeen years old. Nearly all are Americans and Germans; eight are colored. One requirement for appointment is that the applicant must have a home, consequently the domestic conditions surrounding these boys are, as a rule, good. Each boy is paid eight cents for the delivery of every letter, and his average monthly earnings amount to \$24. At the city post office there are thirteen boys on the day force and their hours are continuous from seven in the morning to three in the afternoon. They either bring their lunches with them or are allowed a few minutes, usually ten, in which to get something to eat at a nearby restaurant. The night force also numbers thirteen, and the hours are from three in the afternoon to eleven at night; the same arrangement as to food applies to this force. The other fourteen boys are employed at the substations, their hours being from seven in the morning to six in the evening, with two hours off for lunch, and several intermissions occurring at intervals amount in all to one hour, making the actual working time eight hours. Three of these boys are taking correspondence courses.

Investigation into the cases of forty-one delivery boys revealed the following conditions:

<i>Age.</i>		<i>Nationality.</i>	
9 years	1	American	24
10 years	2	German	11
11 years	2	Italian	3
12 years	7	Irish	2
13 years	8	Hungarian	1
14 years	6		—
15 years	7	Total	41
16 years	7		
17 years	1		
	—	<i>Education.</i>	
Total	41	Attending school	25
		Not attending	16
			—
		Total	41

These boys are engaged in going about the city on foot, on street cars and wagons, delivering goods for department stores, millinery establishments, jewelry stores, grocers, florists' shops, tailor shops and shoe stores. Many deliver newspapers and periodicals to regular subscribers, and receive regular pay from the men who control routes. Their earnings range from sixty cents to \$5.00 per week, those who attend school working on an average two and one-half hours daily and making \$1.90 per week; those who do not attend school work on an average ten hours daily and earn \$3.95 per week. The earnings of those who attend school amount, in proportion to the time devoted to the work, to nearly twice as much as the earnings of those who are out of school. Some are paid at the rate of 10 cents per trip or per bundle delivered, others by the day, but the majority of the regular employees receive their wages at the end of the week. One jeweler employs a boy of fifteen years ten hours a day, pays him \$5 a week and fines him whenever he is late in delivering parcels. Those employed on delivery wagons work from ten to twelve hours daily and on Saturday until nine or ten o'clock at night. The handling of heavy packages is a real hardship for some of these boys; take, for instance, a thirteen-year-old lad who carries large bundles of paper for a wholesale paper house from one building to another after school hours, work which can hardly be termed "healthful exercise"! Several twelve-year-old boys receive \$2.50 each for working four hours daily after school and on Saturday, carrying heavy bundles of clothing from tailor shops to finishers, deprived of almost every joy of childhood and forced within the narrow confines of premature labor by their ignorant and greedy parents.

Cincinnati's public school system includes a school for truants, to which are sent boys charged with truancy, incorrigibility or "non-adjustability." About forty thousand children are enrolled in the public schools of the city, while the enrolment in the school for truants is thirty-three. The school was opened for the first time in September, 1907; it contains a gymnasium, baths, a wood-working room and recitation rooms. A dormitory accommodating ten boys has just been added to the other features of this school. In this institution efforts are made on humanitarian principles to bring these boys to a proper realization of the possibilities involved in their behavior and to inspire in them some degree of ambition

toward worthy citizenship. Under the old system, many of these boys would have been lodged in jail; now they are given another chance in a better environment to learn their duty to society.

The law in Ohio provides that no child under fourteen years of age shall be employed in any gainful occupation; that children between fourteen and sixteen years of age, before securing employment, shall obtain from school superintendents certificates to the effect that they have successfully completed seven specified studies of the primary course, after having presented documentary evidence of age, or if unable to read and write English they may not be employed unless they attend day or night school during employment; and that no boy under sixteen or girl under eighteen shall be employed in any gainful occupation more than eight hours a day before six o'clock in the morning or after seven o'clock in the evening. The eight-hour provision will take effect July 1, 1908.

All this is good, but it is not enough. Some method must be found to apply this law practicably to the street trades of the large cities. Complete protection must be afforded every child under fourteen years of age. Even so, we cannot grant that society has fulfilled its entire obligation. Children fourteen and fifteen years of age are too young and undeveloped to take up such burdens of life, and may the day soon come when the minimum age limit for employment in gainful occupations shall be raised from fourteen to sixteen and the state make all necessary provision for the care of the few children who would otherwise be forced into premature toil because of their unfortunate circumstances,